

It's Okay to Not Be Okay by [talesfromthesnogbox](#)

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Summary:

Jim Hopper knew it was a real emergency when he was woken in the night by a phone call from his son-in-law Mike from the hospital. All was not well, but Jim reminds Mike that sometimes it's okay to not be okay.

It's Okay to Not Be Okay

Author's Note:

So I don't know why I hurt myself with these awful headcannons. I also don't know why I torture myself with writing when I 100% have no time to write so it was written at 1am :)

I have zero experience with any of this by the way, sick children and hospitals are foreign ground.

Please don't hate me for this? Sorry it ended up being so long?

“Joyce... Joyce... Joycie.” Jim shook his tiny wife awake.

She was angry, being woken in the middle of the night when he knew fully well that she had to work the next morning until she saw his face, filled with fear and worry. Her anger softened, as she looked up at him with concern in her sleepy eyes.

“The kids.”

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If there was anything that could get Joyce out of bed in the dead of the night, it would be one of her children in danger. That included her's and Hop's adoptive daughter, El and her young family.

As a young teenager, the girl had been more than supportive of Jim and Joyce's relationship, and of course, Joyce became the mother El never had. Joyce became Jim's blessing in disguise, helping him navigate through raising a teenage girl on his own. El was the catalyst to their relationship, and in many ways, they were the perfect fit. They balanced each other out, showed each other reason, especially when El started dating that Wheeler kid.

“She's too young.” Hop would lament, confiding in Joyce while their daughter sulked in her room. “She's acting she's gonna marry the guy. They're fifteen, there's no reason for all the... all the handsy

stuff on my couch. He needs to respect that this is not his house and they're way too young for all that... that..."

"Oh okay Hop, and how old were you when you were caught with a hand up someone's daughter's shirt?" Joyce fondly remembers giving him a look that turned him red. It was different when it was his kid. He was right, they were young, and he argued he was only looking out for his daughter, especially considering her naïve upbringing, but in hindsight, he was a little harsh on them. Especially considering they did end up married after all.

Which brought him to the present.

The Wheelers liked their sleep. The young couple was twenty-seven going on ninety with the way they turned in promptly at 11:00pm and stayed in bed as long as they could the next day. Their one and a half year old daughter Emily was probably part of the reason why they valued their sleep so much, but even the bouncing baby slept like a rock. So when Jim got a call from Mike at nearly three in the morning, he knew something was wrong.

When Jim and Joyce burst into the hospital waiting room, they instantly spotted their son-in-law.

Mike Wheeler was no longer the lanky teenager he used to be. The boy had grown to be nearly taller than Hop, and was just as hard headed. The two of them didn't always see eye to eye, especially when it came to El and her wellbeing, but there was no arguing that the man would always be there for his daughter and her husband.

Mike did not look good. Puffy eyes, tearstained cheeks... he was beside himself with emotion. Joyce ran to him, enveloping the man she'd known since he was waist high in a comforting hug only a mom could provide. He was unembarrassed as he let the tears fall down his pale cheeks, and Joyce looked to Jim as he placed a comforting hand on the boy's shoulder.

"How is she?" Jim asked in a quiet voice.

"I... I don't know. They won't say anything. Dr. Owens has a team here... they're with her now but... but it doesn't look good."

Jim dropped his chin, looking to the ground willing his tears not to fall. He sniffed loudly, rubbing his eyes to play off the redness as allergies when he heard a small, tear-filled voice. "Daddy?"

Hop looked up to see his daughter, the strongest woman he'd ever known, completely break down.

"Ellie, come here." He said, hugging her close to his chest and letting her tears fall. It was tough when she was thirteen, but it was somehow tougher to watch her cry at twenty-seven. It was even tougher still knowing exactly how she felt.

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"I'm going to grab some coffees." Mike told Jim three hours later. The four of them waited in the uncomfortable seats hearing nothing about the one and a half year old's condition, and Mike needed a walk.

"I'm coming with you." Jim replied. He'd gotten a brief rundown once everyone had calmed down. Something happened at home with Emily... something bad, but Jim had yet to get any details.

The little girl was special. Mike remembered feeling a burst of pride and a burst of fear when he'd caught the girl levitating some of her toys in front of her at just six months old. Sure, it was adorable, but he had no idea how dangerous it could become.

Jim and Mike walked in silence towards the cafeteria filled mostly with off-duty hospital personnel grabbing breakfast and a quick dose of caffeine before a long day's work.

"So what exactly happened?" Hop asked unabashedly.

Mike sighed and ran his hand through his mess of curly hair. "Em woke us up around one this morning crying. El thought maybe she was hungry so we tried feeding her, we tried changing her diaper, rocking her. We tried everything but she just kept crying louder and louder until she was screaming. At one point, we thought she was going to pass out, she was screaming so much." Hop could hear the tears in his voice, threatening to spill over once again. "Poor El, she's

such a good mom. She just kept bouncing her and rocking her... making funny faces to try to get her to crack a smile and stop screaming. I started getting annoyed. God knows why I tried to reason with an 18 month old, but then everything was floating, and her screams just got louder, blood started pouring from her nose, her ears, her eyes. Oh my god Hop it was horrifying, and then it all stopped. The screaming, the floating..." Hop could hear an edge to his voice. "Em just went limp in Ellie's arms."

Hop heard the edge in Mike's voice, blood rushing from his face in fear for his granddaughter.

"I thought she'd just tired herself out at first, fallen asleep, but she wasn't responding to anything, wasn't breathing. Hop it scared me shitless... my little girl... we rushed her in, the team hooked her up, so many wires and tubes, then they took us outside, said we couldn't be with her, that it didn't look good. That's the last we've heard." Mike let out a sob and Jim gathered his son-in-law into his arms as he cried.

It was all too familiar. The sudden panic, rushing to the hospital, all those tubes and wires... it all brought him back to Sara. He knew exactly what Mike was feeling, and he knew how awful it was.

"Look, kid... the next few hours are going to be the toughest hours of your life." His voice shook, but he tried to stay strong for the young man beside him. "I have faith in those people, they'll bring her out of it, they'll get her through and you and Ellie will be holding Em shortly."

"But..." Hop dreaded the question he knew was coming, because he knew the possibility was totally valid. "But what if she doesn't?"

"Kid, you can't think like that."

"Did you think like that?"

Jim sighed, knowing fully well he did. But that was different. Cancer... he had some time with her before she... Sara's illness came quickly, but it was nothing like what Mike and El were going through now. He had some time to prepare himself, talked to doctors about

what to expect, and in hindsight, he was thankful for that time.

"I did." Jim admitted. "It's hard not to when you're in this situation."

"I just... I don't even know what to do right now. Ellie, she's been quiet all night. I know she thinks it's her fault that Emily has these powers. I don't know how to comfort her knowing that maybe Em won't be okay."

The conversation felt all too familiar. The only difference was that Hop didn't have anyone to talk to about it when he was in that exact situation. If he had, maybe his life would be different; maybe he wouldn't have pushed Diane away and came back to Hawkins.

"I'm going to let you in on a little bit of wisdom from one man to another, and I hope you'll take this not from El's dad, but from a man who's been where you're sitting." He started. "Every day... every single day of my life, I feel terrible for how I treated Diane."

The younger man looked up at his father-in-law with a furrowed brow.

"Pain will make you do dumb things, kid. You'll make an ass of yourself, say a lot that you regret, but you can't let it get to you. No matter what happens, you need El, and she needs you. It's going to be hard, trust me, it'll be the hardest thing you'll go through together, but you can't push her away. Don't be like me."

Mike looked straight ahead and fiddled with his wedding band, letting his tears flow down his cheeks.

"I never wanted to admit this to you because you were always such a smug little bastard as a teenager, but you're really good for her Mike. You've got a good heart, and I know you want to be there for Ellie. It's okay to not know how to make her feel better, and it's okay to be angry and upset. Just know that she's feeling all these things too. Let her in, don't try to work it all out on your own and don't pretend to be strong... it's okay to not have all the answers and break down every once and a while." Hop swallowed the lump in his throat. "She's your wife and she loves you. She made a vow to you, for better or for worse, and I know my Ellie, she'll stick to it."

Mike choked out a sob and leaned into the former police chief. "I love her so much, I just hate seeing her in pain."

"I know, kid, I know."

The younger man wiped his eyes and rose to his feet, heart pounding in his chest. "I'm an idiot. I shouldn't have just left her up there."

"You're not. Go back to her, I'll grab us all a little something."

He turned to walk around. "Hey chief?" Jim regarded him with raised eyebrows. "Thanks for this."

"No problem Mike. Now go see your wife."

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Just as he suspected, Jim returned to the waiting room to find El huddled close to Mike on those uncomfortable chairs, his fingers running through her dark locks as he hummed to her. Kid was a fast learner.

"Is she okay?" He asked Joyce, handing her a cup of coffee.

"She's terrified for her baby girl. And Mike?"

"Same."

"Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler?" Mike gently shook El, and everyone anxiously rose to their feet. The doctor's face was unreadable, but hope bubbled in Jim's heart for his granddaughter.

"Come with me, you can see her now." El let out a breath and took Mike's hand. She looked back at Jim and Joyce before disappearing through the doors to see their daughter.